

makes waves in Guilford Theatre

interprets and retells and Roman myths recorded in Ovid's closely framed as stonish women as they work, the stories depict love in its many forms: love for a person, for things, for power; love as desire, greed, hunger, lust; even love at its purest and most beautiful.

Guilford's production, directed by Jack Zerbe, breathes life into these stories, and my lasting impression of the play is of its sheer, moving beauty.

Though much about the production was impressive, the thing that

struck me immediately was its set. Designed by April Soroko, the stately, symmetrical set featured one decidedly unique aspect: a pool of water.

Not only did the pool provide shocks and laughs for the audience, who were splashed often during the play, it was the central area of action, a fact that somehow enhanced the play's timeless quality. This tone was solidified by the echoing, Mediterranean-sounding music, as well as the costumes, which included delicate white garments, flowing dresses, and much exposed skin.

Then, of course, there were the stories themselves. The classic myths, recalling fairy tales with their sensuous and eternal mood, ran to extremes. Some were modernized, some left in their original form; some funny, others movingly sad.

This range of emotions was particularly impressive considering each story took less than fifteen minutes. The cast of ten actors played over fifty roles in the play, and, while I sometimes wanted more time with the individual characters and tales, their multiple

appearances echoed earlier characters and helped create the play's continuity.

The small cast-to-character ratio also showcased the actors' ability. Each played at least five roles — succeeding, for the most part, in bringing them all to life.

It's not easy to swing an audience back and forth between tears and laughter, but this play did it.

It opened with humor, as Zeus (played by Brandon Sasnett) lit a cigarette off the spark he used to create life. The humor continued in a scene between the angsty Phaeton (Noah Foreman) and his therapist (Susan Rahmsdorff), which dryly referenced *The Graduate*. Other stories, like that of Orpheus (Eduard Ferrer) and Eurydice (Samantha Kittle), were movingly tragic.

Still others resonated with beauty — most notably, the last myth of the play. It was the story of a poor and elderly couple,

Baucis (Trina Farmer) and Philemon (Ferrar), who are given one wish as a reward for their generosity. Their wish: to remain together until the end, to die at the same moment.

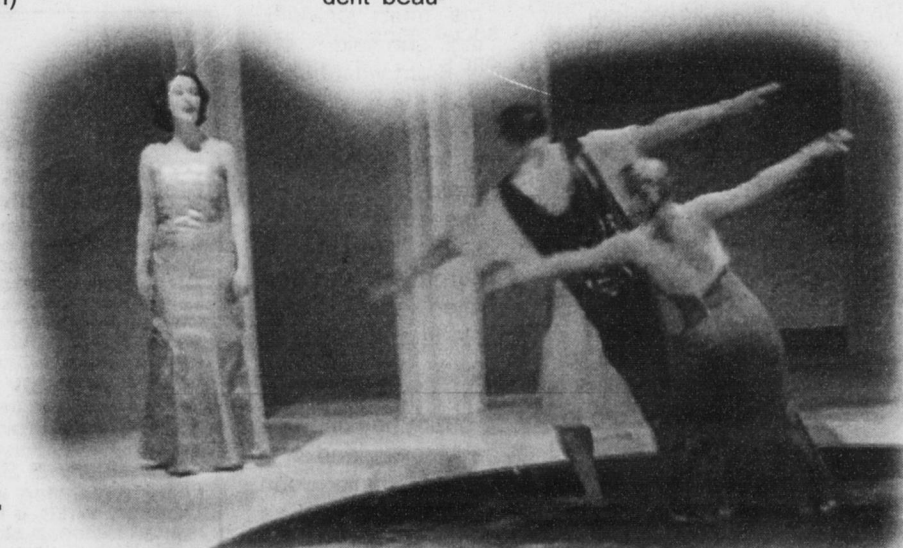
This scene is only one of many exquisite moments, though the play certainly had its flaws, as all plays do. Some acting was better than others, and some stories less believable or less affecting.

But none of the faults were serious, and none hindered *Metamorphoses* from achieving a somehow-transcendent beau-

ty and a quality Guilford hasn't seen since the 2000 production of *Angels in America*.

In addition to the impressive physical appeal of the production's technical aspects, the strength of its acting, and the more subtle draw its mood creates, the play has one additional quality: a basic appeal to human optimism and hope.

Metamorphoses' primary theme is the endurance of love, and I bought it entirely.



JACK HILLEY/SPECIAL TO THE GUILFORDIAN
Trina Farmer, Steffan Schollaert, and Erin Greenway

falls short of genius



COURTESY OF TRIAD STAGE

melodrama. His oddities were often used as comic relief, so when his chance to shine, i.e. schizophrenic breakdown, finally came, his fervent body shaking and pained grimace seemed vastly out of place.

Canzano, playing Robert's less talented disciple, must be commended for his natural comic timing and mastery of the geeky role. One only wonders why a dynamic character such as Hal takes interest in the indolent Catherine.

But if you can get past the frustratingly flat characters, you may be able to detect a poignant theme or two seeping through the dialogue. Mathematics becomes a way for the characters to work

through their problems, from relationships to depression.

Andrew Wiles, a famous mathematician who proved Fermat's Last Theorem, described this therapeutic process in a quote included in *Proof's* playbill:

"Perhaps I could best describe my experience of doing mathematics in terms of entering a dark mansion," Wiles said. "One goes into the first room, and it's dark, completely dark. One stumbles around bumping into the furniture, and gradually, you learn where each piece of furniture is, and finally, after six months or so, you find the light switch. You turn it on, and suddenly, it's all illuminated.

You can see exactly where you were."

Through its discourse on vague numerical concepts and romanticized eccentricities of genius, *Proof* alludes to a higher perfection reached through mathematics.

Unfortunately, it is unable to attain a similar degree of perfection in performance style.

Triad Stage has its good nights and bad nights, and *Proof* falls just short of the former.

If you're still in the mood for a mathematical drama, I would suggest picking up a copy of *A Beautiful Mind* or *Pi* for an equally entertaining evening.